

# The Land of Israel

## Thought for the Week:

"Command the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land of Canaan, this is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance, even the land of Canaan according to its borders.'" (Numbers 34:2)

## Commentary:

Numbers 34 sketches out the borders for the land of Israel, which Joshua was to distribute among the nine and a half tribes that remained to be settled. The tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had already made claim to territories east of the Jordan. The Levites were not to receive tribal territory. Joshua and Eleazar were to cast lots to parcel out the land among the remaining tribes. Numbers 34:19-29 gives a list of the tribal leaders responsible for dividing the parcel among the clans and families of the tribe.

It is easy for believers in Messiah to read about geographical Israel with little interest. Descriptions of the land seem inconsequential to us. After all, Christianity provides a spiritual inheritance in heaven, not an earthly inheritance. Why should believers care about the land of Israel?

One reason we should take an interest in the land of Israel is that God does. The Bible is filled with details about this particular piece of real estate. The land of Israel is the stage on which the majority of the Bible is played out. In God's Book, the land of Israel is a central concern. If it matters to God, it should matter to His children.

When Christian believers first visit the land of Israel, they typically say things like, "The Bible has become so real to me now," or, "I never realized how much I was missing," or "I feel like I've come home." All believers have a special relationship to the land of Israel. It is the cradle of our faith. Our Master's feet tread upon its soil and stones. It is God's holy land in which He placed His city (Jerusalem) and His Temple and caused His presence to dwell.

For a Jewish believer the connection is even more relevant. Not only is the land of Israel the place of his spiritual origin, it is his literal inheritance in this world.

Christians have been making pilgrimages to the Holy Land since the first century. At FFOZ, we encourage all believers in Messiah to make at least one visit to Israel. In a spiritual sense, the land of Israel is the homeland of all believers. The presence of God permeates the land. It is "a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:12). The prophets say that when the Messiah comes, He will gather all the people of Israel back to the land of Israel.